
LANIER FORD SHAVER & PAYNE

P.C.

200 West Side Square, Suite 5000
Huntsville, Alabama 35801
T: 256.535.1100 F: 256.533.9322

U.S. NON-PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

ORNAMENT BASE

BY

FRED B. SIMPSON

Express Mail Label No. EV 342630059 US

TITLE: **ORNAMENT BASE**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to a support assembly for supporting a decorative ornament during display. More particularly, the present invention relates to a horizontal base and assembly for supporting a decorative ornament. Most particularly, the present invention relates to a shelf assembly for supporting a decorative ornament; such shelf assembly including a generally horizontal shelf or platform and a base member. The horizontal platform has attachment means on its underside allowing for easy attachment to other display venues, including, but not limited to a Christmas tree branch or curtain rod.

[0002] Various forms of seasonal and year-round decorations have been designed and used. Most seasonal tree ornaments use S-shaped hooks to suspend the ornament from a branch of said tree. One end of the hook is draped over such branch and the top portion of the ornament is attached to the opposite curved end of the hook. The ornament must be fashioned to accept the hook which may interfere with or limit its ornamental design.

[0003] In some cases it may be desirable not to suspend an ornament from its top portion in order to achieve, among other things, an appropriate ornamental design. One means of achieving this objective is disclosed in U.S. Patent 5,071,098 which describes a complex apparatus that attaches to the tree trunk with a VELCRO® strap and projects

jointed arms with terminal platforms. The ornament may rest on one or both platforms. The platforms of the '098 invention, however, are fixed to the arms of the apparatus which restricts the location of the ornament(s) within the tree.

[0004] Various clips and/or clamps have been described to support ornaments in Christmas trees. U.S. Patent 4,939,004 describes an ornament that adds human features to a Christmas tree. The assembly of the '004 patent comprises a horizontal attachment which attaches to a vertical projection, such as the base or trunk of the tree. U.S. Patent 5,527,006 describes a scissors-like clamp which attaches to a branch. An ornament may then be suspended from the clamp's top portion.

[0005] The present invention overcomes such limitations and provides a new and useful apparatus to support an ornament or figurine generally vertically by attachment to a generally horizontal projection. Additionally, the present invention allows for the display of such ornament on a generally horizontal surface, such as a table top or fireplace mantle.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention recognizes and addresses various of the foregoing limitations and drawbacks concerning the functional display of ornaments both in a manner in which the ornament may be attached to a tree and as displayed on a generally flat surface. The ornamental support base of the present invention may have a top generally flat platform to support an ornament or figurine. Such platform may also have a

generally flat bottom surface with an integral magnetic contact means and attachment means attached thereto. The platform may rest on a base that may contain an opposing polarity magnet for easy securement of such platform to said base and a corresponding number of receiving slots for internment of said attachment means. Such base may be used to display an ornament mounted on such platform on any generally horizontal surface, such as a table or fireplace mantle.

[0007] To display such a mounted ornament on other irregular horizontal surfaces, such as on a tree branch, the platform may be removed from the base and the attachment means connected to such generally flat bottom surface of the platform may be used to attach the ornament to the irregular surface. The attachment means on the bottom of such removable platform may have jaws with gripping teeth that are biased against each other so as to attach the platform to a tree limb or branch.

[0008] It is, therefore, a principle object of the subject invention to provide a new and improved device for the display of seasonal ornaments, figurines and decorative items. More particularly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an apparatus that may easily be used to display such ornaments, figurines and decorative items on an irregularly shaped, generally horizontal projection. In such context, it is still a more particular object of the present invention to provide a device to support seasonal ornaments, figurines or decorative items on a Christmas tree without having to suspend them from a tree branch.

[0009] Still further, it is a principle object of this invention to provide a device that supports ornaments, figurines and decorative items. In such context, it is an object of the present invention to provide a cost-effective method for displaying ornaments, figurines or decorative items on a generally flat horizontal surface, such as a table or a fireplace mantle, with an option to display such ornament using the same platform on an irregular generally horizontal projection, such as a tree branch.

[0010] Additional objects and advantages of the invention are set forth in, or will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art from, the detailed description as follows. Also, it should be further appreciated that modifications and variations to the specifically illustrated and discussed features and materials hereof may be practiced in various embodiments and uses of this invention without departing from the spirit and scope thereof, by virtue of present reference thereto. Such variations may include, but are not limited to, substitutions of the equivalent means, features, and materials for those shown or discussed, and the functional or positional reversal of various parts, features, or the like.

[0011] Still further, it is to be understood that different embodiments, as well as different presently preferred embodiments, of this invention, may include various combinations or configurations of presently disclosed features, elements, or their equivalents (including combinations of features or configurations thereof not expressly shown in the figures or stated in the detailed description). These and other features, aspects and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with

reference to the following descriptions and appended claims. The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate an embodiment of the invention and, together with the descriptions, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

[0012] In one exemplary embodiment, there may be provided a platform with at least one hole therein for the affixation of at least one attachment means to an underside of said platform. An ornament, figurine or decorative item may be mounted on the upper surface of such platform. On the underside of such platform may also be provided at least one integral metallic contact or magnet for adjoining such platform to at least one corresponding opposing polarity magnet on a generally rectangular base. Such base may consist of said at least one magnet and also include at least one receiving slot for the receipt of and internment of said attachment means within such base. Such receiving slot and corresponding attachment means may be oriented in any direction desired by the manufacturer provided they correspond with each other and allow for the internment of said attachment means within said slot when the ornament or other display item is mounted on said base.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] A full and enabling disclosure of the present invention, including the best mode thereof, directed to one of ordinary skill in the art, is set forth in the specification, which makes reference to the appended figures, in which:

[0014] **FIGs. 1A and 1B** are exemplary perspective views of the platform and base of the present invention, in which the base is transparent for illustration purpose only and further depicting the underside of different embodiments of such exemplary platforms including at least one attachment means and at least one integral magnet;

[0015] **FIG. 2** is a perspective overhead view of an exemplary embodiment of a base member of the present invention including the receiving slot and an integral magnet;

[0016] **FIG. 3** is a side view of an exemplary embodiment of the platform of the present invention with an ornament on its upper surface and depicting an attachment means fastening such platform to a generally horizontal projection; and

[0017] **FIG. 4** is a front view of the exemplary embodiment of the platform depicted in **FIG. 3** fastened to a horizontal projection by the attachment means.

[0018] Repeat use of reference characters throughout the present specification and appended drawings is intended to represent the same or analogous features or elements of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Reference will now be made in detail to presently preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are fully represented in the accompanying drawings. Such examples are provided by way of an explanation of the invention, not limitation

thereof. In fact, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention, without departing from the spirit and scope thereof. For instance, features illustrated or described as part of one embodiment can be used on another embodiment to yield a still further embodiment. Still further, variations in selection of materials and/or characteristics may be practiced, to satisfy particular desired user criteria. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover such modifications and variations as come within the scope of the present features and their equivalents.

[0020] As disclosed above, the present invention is particularly concerned with a support assembly for displaying an ornament, figurine or decorative item. Two exemplary embodiments of such platforms **10** of the support assembly of the present invention are depicted in **FIGs. 1A** and **1B**. Reference will be made to only the embodiment of **Fig. 1A**, but it should be noted that the embodiment of **Fig. 1B** merely demonstrated an embodiment including a difference in the number, location and orientation of attachment means **27** on such platform **10**. Platform **10** has a generally flat bottom surface **15** and a generally flat top surface **17**. It should be noted that while the platform is shown in a rectangular shape, it may have any useful or decorative shape. Platform **10** also has a front side **19**, a back side **21**, a first end **23** and a second end **25**. Attached to bottom surface **15** are one or more attachment means **27** for attaching such platform to an irregular and generally horizontal projection.

[0021] **FIG. 1A** depicts an exemplary embodiment of the present invention having two attachment means, one adjacent said first end **23** and the other adjacent to said second end **25**. Although two attachment means are shown, any number of such means may be employed that provide stability and ensure adequate attachment of the present invention to its support. Attachment means **27** has a first end and an opposite end, and has opposing jaw members **29, 31** on the first end of the clip, with jaw members **29, 31** being biased towards one another. The attachment means **27** may be oriented in any manner, including by way of example but not limitation, running from front to back of the platform or side to side or even at an angle. The only limitation on the orientation of the attachment means **27** is that they must correspond to slots provided in the base for their reception (as best seen in **Fig. 2**). Attachment means **27** also have legs **33, 35** on their opposite end from the jaw members. Jaw members **29, 31** are adjacent the front side **19** of said platform **10** and legs **33, 35** are adjacent the back side **21**.

[0022] Jaw members **29, 31** are connected by a pivot pin **37**. A torsional spring surrounds pivot pin **37** and biases the jaws to the illustrated closed position. Leg **35** (adjacent bottom surface **15**) is secured to bottom surface **15** by fastening means **39**. Fastening means **39** may include, but are not limited to, screws, bolts, rivets, glue, adhesive, and the like. As depicted in **FIGs. 1, 3 and 4**, one exemplary embodiment of the attachment means **27** includes an alligator clip. Such clip **27** is fastened to the bottom surface **15** of platform **10** with a screw, as fastening means **39**. Such screw **39** fastens the clip **27** to the platform **10** through a hole in leg **35**. The screw **39** may be attached from either the upper surface **17** or from the bottom surface **15** of the platform **10** and

may be recessed so as to preserve the decorative appearance of the display. The platform 10 may be secured to the base 41 using a magnetic or metal contact 40 on the platform 10 and a corresponding opposing polarity magnet on the base 41.

[0023] Platform 10 is removable from base 41 of the present invention. As best seen in FIG. 2, base 41 has a flat bottom surface 46, a front side 48, a back side 50, a first end 52 and a second end 54. In one exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a plurality of attachment means 27, including, but not limited to alligator clips, are adapted to provide the relatively large force necessary to hold the platform in position on a generally horizontal projection to support and display an ornament, figurine or decorative item 75.

[0024] FIG. 2 illustrates an overhead perspective view of the base 41 of the present invention with the platform 10 removed. Attachment means 27 are housed in one or more receiving slots 56 while platform 10 is resting on top of base 41. While two receiving slots 56 are shown, any number of such slots may be utilized in the present invention provided they equal or exceed the number of attachment means 27. Further, such receiving slots 56 must be identically oriented as their corresponding attachment means 27 for proper mating of the platform 10 and the base 41. Magnetic contact 40 attaches to opposing polarity magnet 50 while platform 10 is resting on top of base 41 to further secure their attachment.

[0025] FIGs. 3 and 4 best illustrates a side and front view of platform 10 as mounted on a horizontal projection 65 with jaw members 29, 31 engaging horizontal projection 65 to secure said platform 10 and its ornament, figurine or decorative item 75 thereto. In the

presently depicted exemplary embodiment, squeezing leg 33 towards leg 35 of attachment means 27 separates jaw members 29, 31 to permit a horizontal projection 65, such as a Christmas tree branch, to be placed therebetween. Upon releasing legs 33, 35 of attachment means 27, jaw members 29, 31 grasp horizontal projection 65 such that the platform 10 remains in position mounted on horizontal projection 65 without rotating about such projection 65.

[0026] With platform 10 so mounted, an ornament, figurine or decorative item 75 may be displayed on top surface 17 of platform 10 and be supported without having to be suspended from a top portion of such ornament, figurine or decorative item 75. An ornament, figurine or decorative item 75 may be positioned on top surface 17 unattached, or permanently attached or even reversibly attached by means well known in the art. When platform 10 is attached to the base 41 of the present invention, attachment means 27 are entombed within receiving slots/holes 56 and the ornament, figurine or decorative item 75 is provided with a generally flat surface upon which it may rest. As a result, such ornament, figurine or decorative item 75 may be displayed on a table, fireplace mantle or other generally flat surface without removing it from said platform 10.

[0027] FIG. 4 illustrates a front view of platform 10 positioned on a horizontal projection 65 which is being grasped by jaw members 29, 31 of attachment means 27. This view illustrates that in the presently depicted exemplary embodiment, jaw members 29, 31 have teeth members 77 which may penetrate horizontal projection 65 and prevent platform 10 from rotating about such horizontal projection 65. Although teeth members 77 are

depicted in the present exemplary embodiment, other frictional means may be used including, but not limited to, ridges, grainy surfaces, adhesives, knife edges, and the like. In the present exemplary embodiment platform 10 is constructed of wood, but may also be constructed of without limitation glass, metals, plastics, other suitable materials or combinations thereof. Although platform 10, bottom surface 15, and top surface 17 are shown as flat, a variety of shapes may be used such as, for example, a concave surface, lip-like or fence-like projections, or mounting posts and the like. Similarly, some of these alternative surface shapes may be used to aid in aligning and/or attaching platform 10 to base 41.

[0028] With regard to the above detailed description of the present invention, it should be noted that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, including variations in size, materials, shape, form, function, and manner of operation, assembly and use, are readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by the present invention. Thus, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. In addition, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, the invention is not limited to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention as set forth in the following claims.